

Testimony of
Amy Farrior
Before the Education Committee
Raised Bill No. 5378
March 6, 2020

Members of the Education Committee, my name is Amy Farrior, and I am a teacher at Marlborough Elementary School for the past 15 years. Thank you for reading my testimony today on Raised Bill 5378, An Act Concerning Integration of Social-Emotional Learning in Programs of Professional Development for Educators in Connecticut. While this proposal is important, it is not enough to address the severity of the current problem.

What is truly necessary is a comprehensive approach to address student trauma and promote social emotional learning. A comprehensive approach would include **Social Emotional Learning and Revising the Common Core for Grades K-2.**

In the past eight years that I have taught kindergarten, we have increased the academic rigor in the tested subject areas of math and reading and decreased the time for students to build upon social skills through play. This increase has also taken away our block of time where we taught “social skills” with the support of our social worker. These were essential lessons that taught students how to problem solve, how to stand up for themselves, how to ask friends to play, and other important kindergarten life skills. Due to this increase in “rigor,” we have in turn stretched our littlest learners so thin that they are now anxious, stressed-out students who struggle to work through problems themselves. The state’s Common Core Standards exacerbate this by neglecting to incorporate social and emotional development into the curriculum and by pushing academic studies into grades where they are not developmentally appropriate.

These factors contribute to children’s emotional dysregulation, which erupts into negative classroom behaviors. It breaks my heart to watch my students struggle, cry, throw their pencils, and crumple their papers because what I am teaching them is NOT developmentally appropriate. Five-year-olds should NOT become stressed out when they can’t find the “missing” addend in a number sentence. I had a student in tears as he was working through this math problem: $7 + \underline{\quad} = 9$. He looked up with me with tears in his eyes, crumpled his paper, and said, “I am not smart enough for kindergarten.” It absolutely crushed me. My five-year-olds should not be learning pre-algebra skills; they should be pretending to cook me a pizza in the play kitchen. My five-year-olds should not be reading at a “Level D” by the end of the school year; they should be getting dirty in a sandbox. My five-year-olds should not be crying because they can’t read; they should be playing with their same-age peers and problem solving and exploring the world around them. It is my hope that you will consider ALL aspects of today’s Raised Bill 5378. Our youngest learners will thank you for giving them their childhood back.

Thank you for considering my testimony and all your efforts on behalf of students in Connecticut.